2t Hutchinson E-4,5 (1950-1951) 1957 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11

VILA RECÔNCAVO

[Town Life]

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632 years ago, after determining that these crops were not sufficiently rewarding, he made a large-scale planting of white
463 cacao. It is still too early to speak of the outcome of this ven-
[242] ture, for the trees have not yet started to give their first fruit, but this instance illustrates his usual energetic spirit.

Dr. Aliança took the office of mayor seriously and gave a
159 great deal of energy to it. His accomplishments were many
632 in the space of a few years: the paving of most of the town's
463 streets, the installation of electric lights on the streets, the formation of a company to sell electricity to those who wanted
653 it, the installation of telephone communications with the capital, and the construction of a new, modern primary school building. As a result of his personal energy and direction these works were completed, or at least nearly so, when he left the office. (According to law, the mayor cannot be re-elected). However, with the exception of building a bridge, nothing was done in the rural areas of the county. Traditionally any public works in the county are done in the county seat.

441 Many of the merchants in Group 1 are small operators.
463 The capitalization of the stores in Vila Recôncavo runs from
443 Cr$100.000,00 to as low as Cr$5.00,00. However, no matter how small the store, it provides a living for someone, or as
[471] they say in Vila Recôncavo, "Sempre da!" To the ordinary town citizen it is difficult to get enough capital together to open a store, but once opened it rarely closes for lack of business. Of the twelve stores in town, eight are owned and operated by men, and the other four belong to women. The best store in
441 town and the poorest one both belong to women. The "best"
• 444 store, Dona Carmen's, is the oldest, located on the main
[428] street leading from the boat dock. At present it is owned by Dona Carmen, who inherited it from her brother. It combines a general store and a bakery, and its prices are often slightly higher than those in other stores. It serves most of the people living in the older section of town. In addition to having the largest stock of ordinary foods, the store also carries finer packaged products such as wines, jellies, and preserves.

444 Bread is baked in the afternoon and delivered to the doors
256 of the customers' houses, still warm and with the delicious odor always associated with bread fresh from the oven. The bakery's customers for the most part have standing orders, receiving bread or rolls each day in time for supper. What is left over is hawked through the streets by the delivery boy,

2: Hutchinson E-4,5 (1950-1951) 1957 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11
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who walks about with a huge round basket on his head crying, "Pão, pão."

Dona Carmen's husband, Damião, is also a storekeeper. His store is in the downhill part of town, near the fishermen. The two stores are run separately, and the couple are doing well financially. In addition to his store, Damião also owns several canoes and fish nets which he rents to fishermen. He is the only storekeeper in town who gives credit to people who cannot pay immediately, allowing bills to run many months and even more than a year. He also allows his customers to borrow money in order to buy things outside his store--for instance fish, which he does not handle. He does not charge interest on these loans, nor seemingly make any demands on those who borrow. On the other hand the borrowers feel a sort of loyalty toward him and do not forget their debts, which they eventually manage to pay.

Three of the smallest stores are owned and operated by women, whose husbands have set them up in business in a small way in order, as one put it, to "give my wife something to do." It is considered desirable for a woman to operate a store and it is usually the beginning of something larger, for later, whenever possible, the husband will stop his own work and help operate the store. In the case of the smaller stores the owner generally lives in the same building, either alongside the store or behind it. The larger storekeepers, however, usually have separate houses. At night they lock up the stores, which are sometimes guarded by dogs or even by the cashiers who sleep there. The storekeepers are usually asked for donations to the church at the time of any special festivals, and generally become politically active after they become established in business.

The stock in most of the stores is pretty much the same, varying in amount rather than diversity: drinks (rum and soft drinks), dried meat (the staple meat of the population), cereals, cigars, cigarettes, estivas (which include beans, rice, and farina, the three great staples of the local diet), as well as coffee, palm oil (azeite de dendê), vinegar, olive oil, garlic, onions, wooden sandals, condensed and powdered milk, salt, sugar, miudezas (small items such as matches and ribbons), toilet articles and laundry soaps, blueing agents and starch, grass mats, kerosene, and in one store aluminum kitchenware which is not sold very often, as well as nails, wire, screws, and wrapping paper and cord. One store in the

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The majority of people in Group 1 live in the older part of Vila Recôncavo, often in the old colonial sobrados, and they rarely descend the hill to the part of town inhabited by the fishermen. Indeed, they mix little with people of the town, and there is almost no social life within the group itself. Parties are expensive, and visiting from house to house in the evening is not common. Vila Recôncavo has no such pastime as the evening walk in the square. This group is seldom united on anything, especially local politics; however, the more distant the question the more apt the group is to be of one mind. [361] [574]

Most families in this group send their children to school in Salvador, go there on holidays whenever possible, receive the city newspaper and the Diario Oficial,[2] and shop in the city as often as they can. [871] [204] [443]

Vila Recôncavo differs in one respect from most other rural Brazilian communities: it has no parish priest. The mother church of the parish (matriz) has long been unable to support its own priest, and the duties which would normally fall to such a person are performed by the Franciscans, whose convent is in Vila Recôncavo. The priests remain within the convent, taking little or no part in the social life of the town. 793 [792]

It will be noted that there was no mention of a drug store in Vila Recôncavo. There was none until 1945, when a nonprofit organization, the Institute of Vila Recôncavo, was opened. This is a medical post supported by federal, state, municipal, and private funds; its director is Friar Innocence, a Franciscan lay brother. The institute is housed in the spacious old buildings of the extinct Third Order of Franciscans, and consists of a pharmacy, an infants' milk and soup distributing center, a maternity post, a dental post, and other medical facilities. The dentist, who has modern equipment, is competent in his work. For several years a doctor was in daily attendance, dividing his time between the institute and the petroleum workers' camp. As a result of a complicated local political conflict, he left the institute, however, and Friar Innocence arranged for a visiting doctor to come from Centro and spend two days a week in Vila Recôncavo. Three town girls were sent to Salvador to study nursing and midwifery, so there is competent medical assistance. 743 [444] [792] 743 759

2. The Diario Oficial is the newspaper in which government laws and regulations are published. As a rule, it is the publication of a regulation which makes it become a law.

4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
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be the *lingua geral*, or general Negro language.[5] The ritual of the more important fetish-cult centers was, and still is, carried on in this language. Inscriptions in Nagô were occasionally to be seen not only on cult buildings but also in small commercial establishments owned and operated by Negroes, like the meat stall on the Baixa dos Sapateiros over whose entrance Nina Rodrigues in 1895 noted the inscription "Kosi oba Kan afi Olorun."[6] So important did Nagô become, and so widespread its use that, although Nina Rodrigues early in the twentieth century estimated that there were only approximately five hundred Africans still living in the city and they were at that time dying at the rate of a hundred and fifty to two hundred a year,[7] one still today, more than three decades later, finds

[5] Nina Rodrigues, intimately acquainted for many years with Bahian Negroes, commends the accuracy of the Visconde de Porto Seguro when he says, "The best known Negroes in Brazil were those coming from the *Costa da Mina*, whence arrived the greater portion of those imported into Bahia; so that in this city many slaves learned little Portuguese but instead communicated among themselves in Nagô." About 1900 he himself wrote: "The Nagô dialect is commonly spoken in Bahia by almost all the old Africans from the various tribes and by a great number of creoles and mulattoes" (*op. cit.*, p. 197).

[6] Rodrigues translates the phrase: "There is no God but Olorun" (principal deity of the Nagô cult). A photograph of the entrance to the shop showing this inscription may be found in *ibid.*, opp. p. 202.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 154. In the seven years from 1896 to 1902, 1,282 Africans died at Bahia. The distribution was as follows:

Year	Total	Male	Female
1896	110	55	55
1897	258	156	102
1898	200	96	104
1899	209	110	99
1900	151	87	64
1901	152	74	78
1902	202	136	66
Total	1,282	714	568

4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
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revered leaders of the Afro-Brazilian world. When a priest argued with her that, since she had not been ordained by the pope, she had no "spiritual authority" to carry on religious rites, she quickly inquired if Moses, "that great prophet and leader of his people, was ordained by the pope?" The first man, she maintains, must not have been a white man but instead a colored man; "if not black, at least red. For do the scholars not say that man originated in Asia, and do white men ever come out of that continent?" Jesus also must have been an African, or at least a person quite dark. "For did not his parents once hide him in Egypt? And is not Egypt in Africa? If Jesus was not dark, how could they have hidden him among the people of Africa?"

This *mãe de santo* was "made" over fifty years ago in the *candomblé* of Engenho Velho. "My *seita* is pure Nagô, like Engenho Velho," she boasts. "But I have revived much of the African tradition which even Engenho Velho has forgotten. Do they have a ceremony for the twelve ministers of Xangô?" No! But I have." She is planning to rebuild her *barracão*, or sacred dance pavilion, to be paid for by tithes levied on the incomes of members of her *seita*. She owns a small store in the Terreiro where she sells the various articles used in the cult ritual and, since the members of the fetish world know that these articles must be, if she sells

[1] According to a well known Bahian *babalaô*, Xangô was a great African chief whose cruelties the people sought to do away with by setting fire one night to his dwelling. Everyone in it burned except Xangô, who walked unscathed through the flames. Astounded, the people prostrated themselves before him and begged his forgiveness. Xangô became a powerful king and subjected many neighboring tribes, twelve of whose chiefs subsequently became his royal advisers, or ministers. Even before his death, which occurred at an advanced age, Xangô was being worshiped. Cf. Martiniano do Bomfim, "Os ministros de Xangô," *Estado da Bahia*, May 5, 1937.

4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
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them, legitimate, the store does a thriving business. She says:

> The *Africano* doesn't worship things made with human hands. He worships nature. What is the *pedra* [the fetish stone]? Is it not a mineral? No human hands have made it.
>
> We are just as Christian as the Catholics. Only we follow the law of Moses. He commanded that sacrifices be made of sheep, goats, oxen, chickens, pigeons, and so forth. Is it not so? We merely obey his commandments.
>
> There are two parts to the Bible, are there not? The Old Testament and the New. We follow the Old as well as the New. In the days before Christ, the people worshiped God with singing and dancing. Is it not so? David played his harp and sang psalms and danced before the Lord. We have our songs, too, and each has a special meaning. Just as the Catholics have something to remind them of their saints, so we have something to remind us of our *orixás*. But we do not worship images made with human hands like they do. We worship nature.

One of the assistants of the *mãe de santo*, an elderly Negro woman who "takes care of" the *terreiro*, is said to be over ninety years of age, is known by an African name, Bádá, and speaks Nagô as well as, or better than, she speaks Portuguese. No one in the fetish world at Bahia is said "to give her the blessing," because she is the "oldest" (that is, the longest "made" or "confirmed") in the city. She laments "the old days" before the Africans in Bahia all died.

A Negro man of seventy-seven years of age, Martiniano, one of two *babalaôs* in Bahia, known and thoroughly respected throughout the fetish world for his piety and sincerity and his knowledge of African customs and traditions, is, upon entering the connecting-room to the *pegi*, saluted by a rapid beat of muffled drums. He bows to the drummers, acknowledging their greeting, steps into the *pegi*, bows low before the altar, touches the ground with the tips of his fingers, and repeats a prayer in Nagô. So learned is he "in

[SALVADOR]

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The large stores dealing in textiles, fashions, jewelry, and women's articles prefer, for the sale of the displays, employees who "look well," a euphemism for designating persons who are white or approaching it in appearance. Only a few years ago one of the largest stores in the city put an advertisement in the papers offering positions to saleswomen "of sound health, of white color, and at least 18 years of age." An informant relates that her sister, in spite of finos features, was not accepted in a very important store. In vain she made herself up attractively, arranged her hair, which is glossy and beautiful, and dressed with elegance; she was not accepted. The manageress told her that she preferred saleswomen with light hair. "The real reason," our informant explains, "is that the clientele does not like to be waited on by saleswomen of dark complexion. The colored girls, when they read announcements in the newspapers asking for employees of good appearance, do not even try to get the job, for they know very well that Whites are preferred; it is only due to great influence that they may be accepted." Another girl with moderately pigmented skin and slightly curly hair presented herself as a secretary in a large store, but the person in charge of personnel told her (and other candidates of the same type as she) that she was very sorry, but the firm preferred light girls. Someone who was present at the interview declared that it was a Portuguese employee associated with the firm who introduced this "racism" in that establishment. In a very famous firm dealing in women's articles, belonging to foreigners, only morenas finas or Whites are accepted. Almost all the employees of both sexes in the stores on the most central and the most important streets are white or morenos. Even in the more modest commercial spheres the situation is almost the same. In approximately 150 small or medium-sized stores dealing in textiles, haberdashery, women's articles, clothing and household articles, electrical goods and hardware, footwear, drugs, foodstuffs and baked goods, on a business street frequented by workers and the poorest population, /50/ not one black person or dark mulatto was seen as manageress, cashier, or saleswoman. "In any case," says a female

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informant, "girls of light color are more readily accepted in these occupations, perhaps because they are content with salaries that are not as high as those the young men demand."

The statistics released by the Bureau of Identification of the police of the State of Bahia confirm these data. The physical characteristics of 273 persons registered during several months of 1950 as merchants or employees of commercial firms were the following:

Position in commerce	Whites	Blacks	"Morenos"	"Pardos"	Métis	Total
Merchants:						
Men . . .	28	-	12	6	-	46
Women .	1	-	-	-	-	1
Employees in commerce:						
Men	80	10	63	42	13	208
Women. . .	8	-	8	2	-	18
Total . . .	117	10	83	50	13	273

One sees that among the merchants the majority is white; among the employees in commerce the majority is colored. This is explained by the fact that the profession of merchant is one in which the Whites predominate (1)

1. Donald Pierson, op. cit., p. 243.

in part because social ascent in this sector depends on financial possibilities. The informants in general could with difficulty mention the name of more than three or four colored persons having a notable position in commerce. Nevertheless, the names of some dark merchants who have occupied important offices in the Trade Association and in other important social institutions are mentioned.